



## Board-to-Board, June 2025

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*A monthly report from the Albemarle County School Board to the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors*

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***Albemarle County School Board Adopts 2025-26 Budget to Sustain Excellence for Students, Staff, and Schools***—The Albemarle County School Board has adopted the 2025–26 fiscal year budget, a \$284 million plan that strengthens investments in students, staff, and academic programs. The budget, effective July 1, 2025, was balanced through \$14 million in new County funding and \$7 million in strategic reductions.

Key initiatives in the approved budget include expanding academic programs focused on accelerated learning and career readiness, improving literacy and math interventions, and enhancing student safety with the addition of two School Resource Officers. The division is also increasing support for students with intensive special education needs.

A significant portion of the budget continues to fund core operations, including competitive pay and benefits for staff, as well as rising costs in transportation, health insurance, and facility maintenance—critical elements of a high-quality, equitable education system.

“We are grateful to Albemarle County for its partnership and support,” said Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas. “Their investment helped close the budget gap and advance our mission.”

The 2025-26 budget reflects Albemarle County Public Schools’ mission to empower lifelong learners and uphold excellence, equity, and opportunity in every classroom. For more details, please visit the division’s [2025-26 Budget Development web page](#).

***Albemarle County Public Schools, Charlottesville City Schools and Area Private Schools Recognize Outstanding Educators***—Each year, the Golden Apple Awards celebrate outstanding teachers from Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS), Charlottesville City Schools (CCS), and local independent schools. These awards honor educators who spark curiosity, foster critical thinking, and go above and beyond to support their students and communities.

Teachers are nominated by members of their school communities and selected for their ability to inspire a love of learning, meet individual student needs, and build meaningful relationships with families. Sponsored by Better Living Building Supply and Cabinetry for over two decades, each Golden Apple Award recipient receives a \$500 classroom grant as part of the recognition.

“Each year, I look forward to celebrating the dedication of our teachers,” said Richard Nunley, former president of Better Living. “They play a vital role in shaping future leaders, and this is one way we can express our gratitude.”

The 2024-25 recipients were honored at a community celebration on May 14, 2025, in Lane Auditorium at the County Office Building (401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville). The recognition ceremony was led by Steve Koleszar, former Albemarle County School Board member and current Chair of the Golden Apple Selection Committee.

This year’s committee also includes Jonno Alcaro, Lisa Utz, Amber Wilkins, and Gwedette Crummie. The Golden Apple Awards remain a meaningful way for the community to recognize educators who make a lasting impact every day.

For a full list of winners, read [our full news release](#).

***Albemarle County Public Schools Celebrates 2024-25 Outstanding Educators and Staff***—Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) is proud to announce the nominees and winners of its 2024-25 division-wide recognition program, which honors excellence among educators, support staff, and school and division leaders. The Licensed Employee of the Year award celebrates licensed staff members such as classroom teachers, school counselors, librarians, instructional coaches, and speech pathologists. The Classified Employee of the Year award recognizes non-teaching staff who play vital roles in schools and departments, such as office associates, custodians, bus drivers, and other support professionals. The program also includes a Leader of the Year award for division administrators and school leaders who exemplify the ACPS mission. New this year is a category honoring First-Year Teachers who have demonstrated exceptional performance as they begin their careers in education.

Each year, school communities and departments nominate individuals who go above and beyond in their service. From these exceptional nominees, one winner in each category is selected by a committee of peers, parents/guardians, and administrators.

This year’s winners are:

- **Licensed Employee of the Year:** Sarah Kiscaden, Mountain View Elementary School
- **Classified Employee of the Year:** William Morse, Transportation Services
- **Leader of the Year:** Ashby Johnson, Principal, Journey Middle School
- **First-Year Teacher of the Year:** Mia Giacomo, Agnor Elementary School

Nominees and winners received a plaque to commemorate their nomination and were celebrated during a School Board meeting. Winners also receive a \$500 award. Additionally, the Licensed Employee of the Year will have the chance to advance to the regional and state Teacher of the Year competitions, and the Classified Employee of the Year will be eligible for the Virginia Department of Education’s Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award.

For a full list of nominees, please read our [full press release](#).

***Jay Thomas Appointed Principal of Center I***—Albemarle County Public Schools is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Jay Thomas as the next principal of Center I, which will be renamed the Albemarle Career Exploration Academy @ Seminole Trail (ACE Academy Seminole Trail) beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

Thomas brings more than 25 years of educational leadership experience, including eight years as Executive Director of Secondary Education for ACPS and eight years as principal of Albemarle High School. He has led initiatives that boosted graduation rates, expanded access to advanced coursework, and introduced innovative, student-centered programs like TEAMS and the Learning Commons.

In his current role, Thomas has supported instructional programs across all 10 secondary schools in the division. He supervises principals, coordinates student progress systems, and partners with local organizations to strengthen college and career readiness opportunities.

His experience also includes leadership roles in Virginia Beach and North Carolina, where he oversaw STEM and CTE-focused schools and developed international partnerships. He is a recipient of several leadership honors, including the Lenoir County Wachovia Principal of the Year award.

Thomas will officially begin his new role on July 1, 2025.

#### ***Noteworthy and Newsworthy***

- Journey Middle School has been [\(re\)validated as a National Demonstration School](#), a recognition that reflects its ongoing commitment to excellence in both the AVID Elective and AVID Schoolwide programs. The school is acknowledged for serving as a center for Teaching and Learning and for exemplifying AVID's mission of closing the opportunity gap for all students.
- Western Albemarle High School's [Even Better Together Multicultural Night](#) was an unforgettable celebration of global cultures! Families, students, and staff gathered to enjoy dishes from around the world, explore interactive cultural booths, play traditional games, and dance to live music from various countries.
- Broadus Wood Elementary School [won the Kindness Counts Challenge](#), hosted by Functional Approach to Character Education! For an entire month, each time a student did something kind, they wrote it on a piece of paper and created a chain that spans the whole school!
- Many of our students were honored as [Peace Keepers by the UVA Batten School](#) for being kind and positive within their school community.
- Red Hill Elementary School had the wonderful opportunity to [learn about swim safety in the classroom](#), led by the amazing team from the YMCA! Students gained valuable knowledge about how to stay safe around water, even before stepping into the pool. We're grateful for this partnership and the life-saving lessons shared!
- Officers with the University of Virginia's Police Department have spent the school year helping Greer Elementary School students with their reading skills. Recently, they held an [end-of-the-year party](#) to celebrate their hard work!